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Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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CONTACT:

Ed Coletta 617-292-5737

MASSCLEANDIESEL Program Cleans Up Exhaust Emissions from Diesel School Buses in Four Communities

Retrofits to Benefit Students in Amherst-Pelham, Pembroke, Sharon and Sturbridge

Amherst-Pelham Regional, Pembroke, Sharon and Sturbridge public schools are the most recent participants in “MASSCLEANDIESEL: Clean Air for Kids,” a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) program that encourages the Commonwealth’s bus owners to install free pollution controls on eligible diesel school buses.

With \$16.5 million in state and federal funding provided by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), under an agreement associated with the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, MASSCLEANDIESEL: Clean Air for Kids aims to install pollution controls – known as diesel retrofits – on thousands of diesel-powered school buses across the Commonwealth by 2010.

“MASSCLEANDIESEL is the nation’s first fully-funded, statewide program to reduce air pollution from school buses,” said Secretary of Energy and Environment Affairs Ian Bowles. “Thousands of children ride buses to school each day, and this program will make sure that diesel emissions don’t ride along with them and compromise their health.”

“Each retrofit will reduce pollution from the exhaust, resulting in cleaner, healthier air for everyone,” said MassDEP Commissioner Laurie Burt. “This is especially important for children, whose developing lungs are particularly susceptible to diesel exhaust’s damaging health effects. With decreased emissions, the risks for asthma attacks, respiratory problems, and other diseases associated with exposure to diesel exhaust will be reduced.”

“The MassCleanDiesel program is a great example of partnerships between federal, state and local officials working together to improve lives for our residents,” said Education Secretary Paul Reville. “Our goal is to provide an excellent and equitable education for all of our students and that starts with helping them arrive at school healthy and prepared to learn. I am pleased to see the strong participation of schools in these efforts to improve air quality.”

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“We are committed to building a transportation system that strengthens communities and supports a clean and healthy environment,” said Massachusetts Department of Transportation Secretary & CEO Jeffrey Mullan.

Collectively, Amherst-Pelham, Pembroke, Sharon and Sturbridge schools have installed retrofits on 12 buses that transport approximately 900 students to and from school daily, as well as various afterschool and enrichment programs.

Amherst-Pelham Regional installed retrofits on three buses that transport 335 students in both towns.

Pembroke Schools installed retrofits on two buses, serving 60 students.

Sharon Community Education installed retrofits on the one bus it owns, which transports approximately 80 students from the town’s three elementary schools and one middle school to various afterschool and enrichment programs.

Sturbridge Schools installed retrofits on six buses, serving 420 students.

These are the first four school systems or school bus operators to complete the MassCleanDiesel retrofit program since July 2008, when the Patrick Administration kicked off the program. Another 20 more bus owners are expected to complete the retrofit process on more than 500 buses over the next few months.

By participating in the program, these school buses received a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC), a crankcase ventilation (CCV) system, or both. DOCs, which function like a catalytic converter in the engine exhaust system, reduce tailpipe emissions. CCVs, which are installed on the engine, greatly reduce the infiltration of blow-by gases from the engine into a bus’s interior.

Together, the two components reduce emissions of fine particulate matter (PM – that is 2.5 micrometers in diameter or less) by at least 20 percent or more, hydrocarbons (HC) by 60 percent, and carbon monoxide (CO) by 60 percent. There is strong scientific evidence that PM is implicated in the rising asthma rates in school-age children and is also considered a probable carcinogen. HC helps form ground-level smog, and exposure to this pollutant is associated with increased hospital admissions for respiratory distress, such as bronchitis. Exposure to CO can cause headaches, nausea, and death.

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Shuster Corporation of New Bedford installed the retrofit devices for the Amherst-Pelham, Pembroke, Sharon and Sturbridge school system buses. Shuster Corp. is one of several vendors on the MASSCLEANDIESEL statewide contract approved by the Commonwealth to install pollution controls on diesel school buses.

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/dep/air/masscleandiesel, e-mail program officials at massclean.diesel@state.ma.us, or call the MASSCLEANDIESEL Help Line at (617) 292-5809.

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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